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The Soviet-Syrian Aid Relationship

Though hardly a new demonstration of support, the Soviet response to the Syrian crisis reinforces the relationship that was strengthened after the expulsion of Soviet military advisers from Egypt in mid-1972. Since then, Damascus has become the major focus of Soviet military assistance in the Third World.

Moscow's arms deliveries to Syria reached a record in 1973

They were also by far the largest deliveries to any of the Arab belligerents. Before the October War, Moscow had shipped equipment to Latakia/ Included in these deliveries were the introduction of 180-mm gun-howitzers, 240-mm mortars, FROG-7 surface-to-surface rockets, the SA-6 mobile surface-to-air missile system, KA-25 helicopters, and Vanya-class minesweepers as well as jet fighters. After hostilities began, Moscow delivered, via air and sea, additional

equipment that included jet fighter aircraft, SAM equipment, tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery, anti-tank missiles, OSA-class guided missile patrol boats, and large quantities of ammunition and spare parts. It is possible that Algeria and Libya paid in cash to the USSR on Syrian account for these arms, but the remainder is thought to have been provided on the usual liberal credit terms

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Syria also depends on Communist countries for a major part of its economic development assistance. Commitments from all the Communist countries (the Soviet share was 45%) during recent years have accounted for about 90% of Syria's total aid from official bilateral sources outside the Arab world. Nevertheless, during the October war, economic emergency assistance was slow in coming from Syria's Communist supporters. Moscow is not known to have rendered any assistance, although it was reported to have pledged help for the reconstruction effort.

Before hostilities broke out, the first stage of the Euphrates Dam, being built with \$133 million of Soviet credits extended in 1966, was completed. This was the most eventful occasion in the Soviet-Syrian 16-year economic aid relationship. The July celebration marked the diversion of the river to a coffer dam adjoining the nearly completed 200-foot rock-filled dam.

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Table 1

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Table 2

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Table 3  
Soviet Technicians in Syria

	Persons <u>1/</u>
	<u>Economic</u>
1970	780
1971	910
1972	1,300
1973	1,200

1. Minimum estimates of those present for one month or more.
2. Includes an unknown number of East Europeans.

Table 4  
Soviet Economic Aid to Syria

		Millions Current US	
Date	Extended Purpose	Amount	Drawn as of
			31 December 1973
Total	Development Aid	317	212
1957	Line of Credit for: Railroad construction Fertilizer Plant Petroleum Exploration Petroleum Storage Locomotives, etc.	100	88
1966	Euphrates Dam	133	123
1972	Lines of Credit for: Petroleum Development Railroad construction Electrification Irrigation	84	1

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